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Letter dated 29 June 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the forty-fifth monthly report of the Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) (see annex). The present letter covers the period from 23 May to 22 June 2017.

I take note that, with the destruction of the remaining aircraft hangar on 6 June 2017, in the presence of an OPCW team, OPCW has now verified the destruction of 25 of the 27 chemical weapons production facilities declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. OPCW remains unable to verify the condition of two above-ground stationary facilities, once again due to the prevailing security situation.

I further take note that the date of the high-level consultations between OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic for resolving outstanding issues related to the declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic remains under consideration. While the documents submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic provide a number of details on some of the outstanding issues, I regret that in the majority of cases that information fails to clarify any of those issues. I reiterate my strong encouragement for timely cooperation between the Syrian Arab Republic and OPCW so that those issues may be resolved as soon as possible. In that regard, I welcome the fact that planning for a second inspection at the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre is under way.

The OPCW fact-finding mission in Syria is continuing its work to investigate allegations of the use of chemical weapons on 4 April 2017 in Khan Shaykhun, where the biomedical, biological-environmental and environmental samples collected by the fact-finding mission have indicated exposure to sarin or a sarin-like substance. I welcome the deployment of an advance team to Damascus to gather further information in that regard, and I note the ongoing preparatory work of the fact-finding mission for a possible visit to the alleged site. However, the Director-General also makes reference to new developments that will be reflected in the forthcoming fact-finding mission report and states that he has therefore decided not to deploy the fact-finding mission to Khan Shaykhun. I look forward to receiving the report of the fact-finding mission when it is available and reiterate my condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by any party, under any circumstances. Accountability for their use must follow from the identification of those responsible.

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The OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism recently submitted its sixth report. I am confident that the Mechanism will continue to implement its mandate in an independent, impartial and objective manner.

I take note that, on 15 June 2017, the Joint Investigative Mechanism addressed a request for information to the Syrian Arab Republic and to relevant Member States. That information request was related to the Um-Housh incident on 16 September 2016, where the OPCW fact-finding mission determined that the victims reported to have been involved in the incident had been exposed to sulfur mustard. In that regard, I emphasize the need to support the Mechanism in accessing quality information needed for the investigation. The Mechanism is also continuing to collect information related to the Khan Shaykhun incident of 4 April 2017, while awaiting a report from the OPCW fact-finding mission.

The work of the Joint Investigative Mechanism to identify those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic is of critical importance. I again call upon all States to support both the OPCW fact-finding mission and the Mechanism.

As previously determined by the Security Council, the use of chemical weapons anywhere constitutes a threat to international peace and security and remains a serious violation of international law. I hope that the Council will now demonstrate the necessary unity and utilize all means at its disposal to ensure that those who have used chemical weapons are held accountable, in order to deter and put an end to those inhumane acts. There can be no impunity for such abhorrent attacks.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

Annex

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

I have the honour to transmit to you my report entitled "Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme", prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of OPCW Executive Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), both dated 27 September 2013, for transmission to the Security Council (see enclosure). My report covers the period from 23 May to 22 June 2017 and also covers the reporting requirements of Executive Council decision EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013.

(*Signed*) Ahmet **Üzümcü**

Enclosure

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

Note by the Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme

Background

1. In accordance with subparagraph 2(f) of the decision by the Executive Council (hereinafter "the Council") at its Thirty-Third Meeting (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated 27 September 2013), the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter "the Secretariat") is to report to the Council on a monthly basis regarding the implementation of that decision. In accordance with paragraph 12 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), the report by the Secretariat is also to be submitted to the Security Council through the Secretary-General.

2. The Council, at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled "Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons and Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities" (EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013). In paragraph 22 of that decision, the Council decided that the Secretariat should report on its implementation "in conjunction with its reporting required by subparagraph 2(f) of Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1".

3. The Council, at its Forty-Eighth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled "Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria" (EC-M-48/DEC.1, dated 4 February 2015) noting the Director-General's intent to include reports of the OPCW Fact Finding Mission (FFM) in Syria, along with information on the Council's discussion thereof, as part of the monthly reporting pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). Similarly, the Council, at its Eighty-First Session, adopted a decision entitled "Report by the Director-General Regarding the Declaration and Related Submissions by the Syrian Arab Republic" (EC-81/DEC.4, dated 23 March 2016), noting the Director-General's intent to provide information on the implementation of that decision.

4. The Council, at its Eighty-Third Session, adopted a decision entitled "OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism Reports on Chemical Weapons Use in the Syrian Arab Republic" (EC-83/DEC.5, dated 11 November 2016). In subparagraph 12(a) of that decision, the Council decided that the Director-General shall "regularly inform the Council on the implementation of this decision and incorporate information regarding the implementation of this decision into his monthly reporting to the United Nations Security Council, through the United Nations Secretary-General, regarding EC-M-33/DEC.1".

5. This, the forty-fifth monthly report, is therefore submitted in accordance with the aforementioned Council decisions and includes information relevant to the period from 23 May 2017 to 22 June 2017.

Progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic in meeting the requirements of Executive Council decisions EC-M-33/DEC.1 and EC-M-34/DEC.1

6. Progress by the Syrian Arab Republic is as follows:

(a) As the destruction of the remaining aircraft hangar was completed on 6 June 2017 in the presence of OPCW inspectors, the Secretariat has now verified the destruction of 25 of the 27 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. The condition of the two stationary above ground facilities remains to be verified.

(b) On 16 June 2017, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Council its forty-third monthly report (EC-85/P/NAT.4, dated 19 June 2017) regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its CWPFs, as required by paragraph 19 of EC-M-34/DEC.1.

Progress in the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons by States Parties hosting destruction activities

7. As reported previously, all of the chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic that were removed from its territory in 2014 have now been destroyed.

Activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to Executive Council decisions EC-81/DEC.4 and EC-83/DEC.5

8. Further to what has been reported on previous occasions with regard to the Syrian Arab Republic's declaration, the Secretariat continued its review of the documents submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic on 18 May 2017, in accordance with Council decision EC-81/DEC.4 and paragraph 6 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5. While the newly submitted documents provide a number of details on some of the outstanding issues, in the majority of cases this information fails to clarify, beyond doubt, any of these issues. In a note verbale dated 1 June 2017, the Secretariat reiterated its request to the Syrian Arab Republic to renew efforts and identify documents and other relevant information that would better assist in clarifying outstanding issues. The precise date of the high-level consultations between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Secretariat, as well as a date for interviews with certain individuals involved in decision-making roles within the Syrian chemical weapons programme, remains under consideration.

9. In accordance with paragraph 11 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, the first inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) took place from 26 February to 5 March 2017. A report on these inspections was issued by the Director-General on 2 June 2017 (EC-85/DG.16). As mentioned in this report, the Secretariat has commenced planning for the second inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah SSRC facilities, to be conducted in the second half of 2017.

Other activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic

10. An amendment to the tripartite agreement between the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the OPCW, and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, and an amendment to the contribution agreement between the OPCW and UNOPS have been now signed and have entered into force. These amendments will extend until the end of December 2017 the support provided by UNOPS to the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, and ensure that the necessary administrative and logistical support is provided to the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM).

11. As requested by the Council at its Seventy Fifth Session (paragraph 7.12 of EC-75/2, dated 7 March 2014), the Secretariat, on behalf of the Director-General, has continued to brief States Parties in The Hague on its activities.

12. As at the cut-off date of this report, seven OPCW staff members were deployed as part of the OPCW mission in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Supplementary resources

13. As previously reported, a Trust Fund for Syria Missions was established in November 2015 to support the FFM and other remaining activities, such as those of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). As at the cut-off date of this report, contribution agreements totalling EUR 9.7 million had been concluded with Canada, Chile, Finland, France, Germany, Monaco, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and the European Union.

Activities carried out with respect to the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria

14. During the period under review, the FFM continued its work regarding the allegations of use of chemical weapons on 4 April 2017 in the Khan Shaykhun area of southern Idlib in the Syrian Arab Republic, which reportedly resulted in the deaths of over 80 people, including children, and injuries to hundreds of others. As reported previously, a Note entitled "Status Update of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria Regarding a Reported Incident in Khan Shaykhun, 4 April 2017" (S/1497/2017, dated 12 May 2017) was issued by the Secretariat to summarise the activities conducted by the FFM until 12 May 2017.

15. The FFM has continued its preparatory work with the support of a representative from the Office of the United Nations Special Envoy to Syria regarding a possible visit to the alleged site of the incident at Khan Shaykhun. In this regard, an advance team of the FFM was deployed to Damascus from 8 to 10 June 2017, which was also tasked with gathering further information on the alleged incident. However, in view of new developments that will be reflected in the FFM report to be issued soon, the Director-General has decided not to deploy the FFM to Khan Shaykhun.

16. Guided by Council decisions EC-M-48/DEC.1 and EC-M-50/DEC.1 (dated 23 November 2015), as well as United Nations Security Council resolution 2209 (2015), the FFM has continued to study all available information relating to the allegations of use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Conclusion

17. The main focus of the future activities of the OPCW mission in the Syrian Arab Republic will be on the activities of the FFM and on the implementation of Council decisions EC-83/DEC.5 and EC-81/DEC.4, including declaration-related issues, as well as on the confirmation of the status of the two stationary above-ground facilities, and annual inspections of the underground structures already verified as destroyed.